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Reforming Christian Higher Education: Why Christian Colleges and Universities Need Reformation Theology

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by Javier Garcia

Introduction

In order for this article to make sense, I will begin by providing some context about the university where I teach. My situation is, I believe, similar to that of many professors in Christian colleges and universities. I teach in a mid-size evangelical university in a rural area that serves mostly regional students. The vast majority are non-denominational and have little to no historical, philosophical, or theological background when they arrive. I serve two roles, one as Assistant Professor of Theology in the College of Christian Studies and another as the Associate Director of a Great Books honors program. Most of my job consists of moderating seminar discussions on classic texts and mentoring students as they travel through the four-year program. My students come to my office with questions ranging anywhere from the personal to the theological; whatever the issue, their questions usually tie back to their faith and how it relates to what we have been reading and discussing in class. For many students, this education is revolutionary because they are encountering the Bible and the Christian tradition for the first time.

There is one curiosity, however, which I have noticed and would like to explore in this article: it is the persistent and predictable student aversion to the Reformation and its theology. As soon as we get to Luther and Calvin, the seminar becomes tense, and student frustration with the material is evident throughout the conversation. To a certain extent, the program is somewhat rigged to produce this effect. We begin in the freshman year with the wisdom of the Greeks and crescendo with Augustine's masterful articulation of the Christian faith. Then in the sophomore year, students are enveloped in the elaborate beauty of the Middle Ages, with thinkers like Boethius, Bonaventure, Dante, and Hildegard, to boast of the riches of medieval Catholicism. It is no wonder that when we meet the reformers, they pose a threat to the new world stu-

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dents have come to love. As we move past these figures into the early-modern period, the oft-rehearsed narrative of unintended Reformation is confirmed. Students see the Reformation and its theology as responsible for kick-starting the secularization process that has led to our lamentable secular age. Nothing is left for students but to kill the fathers of Protestantism and to find a more compelling home for their Christian faith (if they don't walk away altogether). Some students turn to the gatekeepers of tradition—Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy—for answers; others settle for liberal Protestantism; yet others move into the mainline denominations, mostly Anglicanism; those who remain evangelical do so with a nagging doubt, and they sit a little less comfortably in this context than they used to.

Ultimately, the problem is not chronological but doctrinal. My students simply cannot accept what the reformers saw as the most distinctive and precious doctrines of the Christian faith, namely, the authority of Scripture, justification by faith alone, and, above all, predestination. The growing unpopularity of these distinctives is documented by the Pew Research Center, which found on the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation that "the theological differences that split Western Christianity in the 1500s have diminished to a degree that might have shocked Christians in past centuries," with just "30%" of U.S. Protestants affirming *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*.[1]

Given length constraints, I will focus on predestination in the rest of this article. It is no secret that most evangelicals are Arminian in their soteriology, children not of Luther and Calvin but of Wesley and Finney. Indeed, my students have an enduring romance with free will, for them an inviolable principle that makes monergism—the idea that God saves completely, without merit or cooperation from the human free will—an insult to human dignity and unthinkable for a loving God. Monergism vs. synergism is the impasse between me and my students, a divide which I believe is indicative of the broader turn away from the magisterial reformers as helpful sources in Christian theology.

This article aims to recover the importance of the doctrine of election in Reformation theology, not only for my students (and those like them at other institutions) but also as a resource in Christian higher education, specifically in evangelical colleges and universities. The Canons of Dort and particularly its articles on Unconditional Election are crucial for understanding and retrieving the very heart of the Reformation project along with its continued promise for today.

Election and Assurance in Reformation Theology

Election apart from free will and the assurance of salvation were absolutely decisive and foundational for the early reformers. According to intellectual historian Steve Ozment, "From Luther to the American Puritans the central religious problem of mainstream Protestantism became the certitude of salvation…[and] the trustworthiness of God's word and promise."[2] The famous debate between Erasmus and Luther over the free will involved "the most fundamental discussion of human nature and destiny,"[3] and Luther spoke of it in the strongest of terms. In the "Heidelberg Disputation" of 1518, Luther states, "After the Fall, free will is something in name only and when it does what is in it [*facit quod in se est*], it sins mortally."[4] In his 1520 *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles Unjustly Condemned by the Roman Bull of Leo X*, Luther put it even more sharply:

> I have expressed it improperly when I said that the will, before obtaining grace, is only an empty name. I should rather have said straightforwardly that free will is really a fiction…with no reality, because it is in no man's power to play any evil or good…[;] everything takes place by necessity.[5]

Now, Luther's attack on the free will, which he saw as an assault on all forms of Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism (including Erasmus' version of it), is not to say that human beings do not have freedom of choice in everyday life, but rather that "with regard to God and in all things pertaining to salvation or damnation, man has no free will, but is a captive, servant, and bondslave, either to the will of God or to the will of the devil."[6] As Ozment explains, for Luther

> Fallen human nature, apart from God's grace, "naturally" inclined to the opposite of what God required of it. The "necessity" of salvation

> was thus a "necessity of immutability," a necessity resulting both from the constant character of God's will and the evil character of fallen human nature.[7]

In Luther's eyes, there is no way tragically sinful human beings can somehow use their will to approximate or earn salvation, which means salvation is, necessarily, purely God's work.

The purpose of this doctrine and the reason behind Luther's insistence lay in the comfort it provided for believers. In a shift that remains unthinkable to my students, Luther emphasized God's will instead of human will in salvation, because that is the only way our salvation can be secure. Simeon Zahl, a theologian at the University of Cambridge who has done much work recovering the importance of experience in Luther and Protestantism, writes this: "a core feature of the doctrine of justification as Luther and other early Reformers understood it is *its orientation to the psychological and emotional life of the Christian*."[8] Pointing to the experiential language of Article 4 of the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* on justification by faith alone, penned by Philip Melanchthon, Zahl comments, "For Melanchthon the key to understanding forensic justification lies above all in understanding the powerful affective salience he perceives it to have for fearful human beings with troubled consciences," especially for consolation, freedom, peace, and joy.[9]

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It should come as no surprise, then, that Calvin's reflections on election in the 1559 *Institutes of the Christian Religion* are permeated with language of comfort and assurance. He writes of the doctrine, "those who rightly and duly examine it as it is contained in his Word reap the inestimable fruit of comfort."[10] Assurance of salvation, while confirmed in external signs of true faith, ultimately lies in Christ. As Calvin remarks, "Christ…is the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election."[11] Calvin's further sections on predestination already contain within them the seeds of Dort based around this principle of comfort, assurance, and freedom from anxiety concerning election.[12] Predestination is, in a word, "our only ground for firmness and confidence"[13] and "brings no shaking of faith but rather its best confirmation."[14] As the historian Owen Chadwick claims, for Calvin (and subsequently for the Calvinists that followed him), "The Christian's assurance of his election to eternal life was the deepest source of his confidence, his fearlessness, his humility, and his moral power."[15] Zahl adds,

> Calvin argues we should agree with him on election not just because of exegetical-theological arguments…but because it is only through correct understanding of this doctrine that a certain kind of fear of God can be correctly managed and dealt with.[16]

For the early reformers, then, a monergistic soteriology, specifically in embracing God's election that was not dependent upon human free will or good works, was both their battle ground and prized treasure for the consoling of trembling consciences and enabling a joyful Christian life in response.

Undoubtedly, the Canons of Dort are controversial and divisive. To many, they represent the crystallization of the cruel and austere doctrines concerning salvation that began with bogeyman Calvin. To others, the historic synod (1618-19) articulates the glory of Reformed theology, which should be taken not as the whole of this tradition but rather as a part of the Three Forms of Unity, together with the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) and Belgic Confession (1561). Simply stated, Dort performs the most explicit confrontation of the competing assumptions of synergism in Arminius and the Remonstrants and of monergism among the Contra-Remonstrants.[17] The question for the evangelical becomes: which is the least bitter pill to swallow? For all their love of choice, evangelicals will have to choose their poison, either for or against the free will in salvation. Entailed therein is not just a decision for doctrine but also one for the comfort

and assurance offered by that doctrine. Let us not forget the first question of Heidelberg: "What is thy only comfort in life and in death?" This is echoed in what the Palatinate delegates wrote concerning the Remonstrant theology:

> What is this other than a disparagement of the glory due God in free election, of the praise due to Christ for redemption, and of the power of the Holy Spirit in conversion? It is also a weakening of Christian comfort in life and death and a tearing up of the certainty of our salvation. Finally, it is an enervating of filial fear and trust in the hearts of believers. Rather it inflames the pride of man against God, so that he glorifies not in God or in Christ, but in himself.…[18]

W. Robert Godfrey summarizes this well when he writes, "The Synod believed that in this theological controversy the glory of God and the comfort of the Christian were at stake."[19] Of course, the bigger question is which of the doctrines most cohere with Scripture, but for my purposes here, I will focus on how the writers of the canons understood election to be a comforting and salutary doctrine.

The Synod of Dort on Unconditional Election

According to the Canons of Dort[20]—concentrating here on the articles concerning unconditional election (but repeated throughout the text)—God's election is a most comforting doctrine precisely because of the security it provides for the believer in placing salvation in God's hands and not in human hands. The articles proceed simply and logically to establish that God's election of some human beings to salvation is entirely gracious.[21] Article 1 clearly states that, because all have sinned under Adam, "God would have done no one an injustice if it had been his will to leave the entire human race in sin and under the curse," citing verses from Romans to this effect (Rom. 3:19, 23, 6:23). As such, Articles 2 and 3 affirm God's graciousness in manifesting his love to the world through Jesus Christ, in allowing those who believe to be saved, and in sending preachers of the gospel to call sinners to repentance and belief. With Articles 4 and 5 come the two possibilities of wrath or salvation, while still maintaining that "The cause or blame for this unbelief, as well as for other sins, is not at all in God, but in humanity. Faith in Jesus Christ, however, and salvation through him is a free gift from God," citing verses from Ephesians and Philippians pointing to the grace of salvation (Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29).

Perhaps counter-intuitively, it is in the divine decree of election and its corresponding affirmation of reprobation—where objectors pinpoint the terror of the doctrine—that the language of comfort comes to the fore. The eternal decree of God of election "provides holy and godly souls with comfort beyond words" (Article 6). Throughout, the language of God's action is markedly positive, pointing to the "unchangeable purpose," "sheer grace," and glory of this decree: "God did all this in order to demonstrate his mercy, to the praise of the riches of his glorious grace" (Article 7). Crucially, in Articles 9 and 10, the Canons stand firm in opposition to the Remonstrants by maintaining that election is completely undeserved. Article 9 states,

> This same election took place, not on the basis of foreseen faith, of obedience of faith, of holiness, or of any other good quality and disposition, as though it were based on a prerequisite cause or condition in the person to be chosen, but rather for the purpose of faith, of the obedience of faith, of holiness, and so on.

In other words, neither faith nor obedience leads to salvation; quite the opposite: election brings forth faith, obedience, and holiness. Furthermore, God's unchangeable election is neither arbitrary nor deserved; instead, "the cause of this undeserved election is exclusively the good pleasure of God" (Article 10). While this goes beyond our desire to know why or how God elects, it wisely puts a limit on knowledge that is too lofty for human inquiry and instead points to God's pleasure as the sole basis for salvation.[22]

The articles concerning assurance are equally pastoral. First, they recognize that assurance is "given to the chosen in due time, though by various stages and in differing measure," which allows room for those who struggle with this assurance (Article 12). Nevertheless, the "unmistakable fruits of election," by which believers gain assurance, are "a true faith in Christ, a childlike fear of God, a godly sorrow for sin, a hunger and thirst for righteousness, and so on" (Article 12). In these, the mere fact of faith and long-

ing for the things of God are enough to grant assurance to believers. Assurance is not static, however, but rather produces fruit of its own: humility before God, adoration towards him for his mercy, and growth in love for the one who first loved them. Peter Feenstra links these back to the work of Christ when he remarks, "All the fruits have their roots in Christ….We gain assurance by examining what he accomplishes in us."[23] Herein, Dort explicitly rejects the "carnal" self-assurance that is void of good works (Article 13). In these formulas, the Synod rejects all caricatures of fatal determinism and laxity that are often leveled against Reformed theology.

Moreover, the pastoral sensitivity of Dort concerning election shines forth in its discussion on reprobation and the proper way to teach election. It is important to note, for example, how the language of election is active whereas the language of reprobation is passive. As Article 15 states, God "pass[es] by" the reprobate, "leav[ing] them in their common misery," "not grant[ing] them" saving faith and conversion. It is only when this contrast to election is established that the Article goes on to provide active language in reprobation: "but finally to condemn and eternally punish those who have been left in their own ways and under God's just judgment." Indeed, given the potential pitfalls of these difficult teachings, the Canons provide instructions for teachers of the doctrine of election, which are particularly relevant to Christian pastors, theologians, and educators. Article 14 warns, "this teaching must be set forth with a spirit of discretion, in a godly and holy manner, at the appropriate time and place, without inquisitive searching into the ways of the Most High." At the end of this article, the Canons point once again to glory and comfort: "This must be done for the glory of God's most holy name, and for the lively comfort of God's people." Article 16 provides guidelines for proper responses to the doctrine of reprobation, depending on personal circumstance. Interestingly, Article 17 provides comfort for believers who have lost infants in writing, "godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in infancy."[24] The final word for the Synod on unconditional election, however, is one of mystery and doxology, following Paul's own concluding praise of God in this discussion from Romans 11:33-36.[25] With Paul, then, Dort ultimately breaks forth in wonder and recognizes the limits of human inquiry on this doctrine.

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The totalizing effect of the Canons, therefore, is in continuity with the Reformation by pointing to the comfort of the doctrine of election and the assurance of salvation it offers to believers.[26] As Cornelis Venema observes, the Canons of Dort were able to maintain the paradoxical but biblical balance of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, placing salvation totally in God's hands and yet compelling believers to live out their freely given salvation in fear and trembling.[27] Indeed, it is the Canons' resolute theocentrism that allows for any real comfort in the believer to be possible. Venema comments,

> When our salvation is made to depend, even in the slightest measure, on our own initiative and persistence in the course, it hangs not from the thinnest of threads but from nothing at all. Nothing could more certainly steal from the believer his hope and confidence, whether in this life or the life to come than to rest on or place his trust in his own resources, pluck, or self-determination. The only solid comfort, by comparison, is to be found in God the Father's gracious election of His people, God the Son's perfect provision and atonement on their behalf, and God the Spirit's calling them into and preserving them in fellowship with Christ through the Gospel.[28]

The Arminian anthropocentric alternative, in preserving even a modicum of the free will in salvation, eliminates this comfort by shifting the responsibility onto believers not only to attain but also to maintain salvation. In other words, the price of the shift is too great, trading a glorious inheritance for unappetizing stew (to make the required Jacob and Esau reference). When comfort comes from the individual's efforts, the pressure is crushing because it

is impossible. With Venema, I fear that this dogged evangelical commitment to the free will at any cost stems from a captivity to Enlightenment thinking, which prizes human autonomy, liberty, and choice above all.[29] More than that, though, I wonder if students recognize their Pelagian tendencies and departure from the Reformation when they uncritically reject monergism in the name of freedom. If the Reformation taught us anything, it is that true freedom comes from God, not from ourselves.

Conclusion: Reformation Theology, Dort, and Christian Higher Education

What does the Synod of Dort have to do with Wheaton College? In other words, what does any of this have to do with Christian Higher education? One word: anxiety. The sweeping crisis of anxiety on college campuses and among young people generally is well-documented[30] and can be overwhelming both for students and faculty alike. Christian colleges are not immune to this phenomenon and instead struggle to provide paths forward for students coping with anxiety. Now, of course, much of this medically diagnosed anxiety has little to do with faith and may be more closely linked with overuse of smartphones and screens,[31] among other potential causes. Nevertheless, I do ask myself how the doctrine of election, when rightly understood and taught, could help college students who struggle to cope emotionally. For those Christian students who come see me in my office and whose basic preoccupation is whether they are good enough or what will happen with their future or whether they are acceptable to God, the comfort and assurance that is distinctive to monergism may help them as they seek simply to know God, to love him, and to live their lives before him. In no way am I suggesting that we do away with the good and necessary medical response to a health condition. What I am proposing is that the distinctive commitment of the magisterial reformers to monergism may help those with trembling and anxious consciences to reap the affective benefit of Reformation teaching. Indeed, their current devotion to Arminianism is not helping to comfort a conscience that is already over-burdened with choices of the will—what major to choose, what career to choose, what spouse to choose, etc. A dose of Dort on election and providence could help alleviate this pressure, bringing peace where it is sorely needed.

On another level, however, Christian colleges and universities need to preserve the Reformation deposit as a key distinctive of their Protestant heritage. It is no secret that institutions of evangelical higher education are facing formidable challenges and requiring nearly acrobatic tactics of innovation to secure their survival; many are failing to adapt and closing their doors.[32] In the age of Trump, this insecurity concerning the future of Christian higher education has been compounded with a crisis over evangelical identity and its future.[33]

Among the responses to this uncertainty has been a call to remember the theological commitments that make evangelical institutions distinctive in the marketplace and desirable for students. One such response, as proposed by Chancellor of Trinity International University David S. Drockery, is to recover the church's shared heritage and tradition, particularly as articulated in the Nicene Creed, as a way of using the past to inform Christian Higher Education as it moves into the future.[34] While this is well and good, James K. A. Smith's proposal is bolder in its call for a recovery of particularly Protestant distinctives. In his provocative piece "The Future is Catholic: The Next Scandal for the Evangelical Mind," Smith agrees with Mark Noll's assessment that evangelicalism "needs to find its fount and future in the broader Christian tradition—even as it is itself a gift to these older traditions."[35] Smith goes further, stating, "…I would suggest we rekindle an unapologetic *Protestant* identity that will be, at the same time, a thick confessional and ecclesial identity. Being Protestant is *how* evangelicals can be Catholic."[36] This is what I am trying to do in this article, namely, to bring attention to the distinctively Protestant witness that can help revitalize our common mission as Christians in higher education and beyond.

To be genuinely Protestant in the mode of the magisterial reformers is simply to cling to the promises of God and to trust in his word. This is true not least when it comes to the security of our eternal destiny. As evangelical colleges and universities continue their important work, they should preserve the deposit bequeathed by the first reformers as the great treasure of Protestantism and Christianity as a

whole. It is in this way that we can stay faithful to the gospel and to the red line that runs from Wittenberg to Dort. This is the good news of our prodigal God, who loves and elects us unconditionally. I will end here with Luther's last words, an apt reflection on the state of our lives before God, now and in eternity: "We are beggars. This is true."

Endnotes

1. "After 500 Years, Reformation-Era Divisions Have Lost Much of Their Potency," *Pew Research Center*, August 31, 2017, https://www.pewforum.org/2017/08/31/after-500-years-reformation-era-divisions-have-lost-much-of-their-potency/.
2. Steve Ozment, T*he Age of Reform 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 244.
3. Ozment, *Age of Reform*, 290.
4. "Heidelberg Disputation," quoted in Ozment, 294.
5. "Defense and Explanation of All the Articles Unjustly Condemned by the Roman Bull of Leo X," quoted in Ozment, 294.
6. *The Bondage of the Will*, quoted in Ozment, 300-301.
7. Ozment, 299. Ozment is not as sympathetic to Calvin, in whom he saw a "re-Catholicizing" of Protestant theology on justification by faith alone and assurance. Ozment, 352-80.
8. Simeon Zahl, "Revisiting the 'Nature of Protestantism': Justification by Faith Five Hundred Years On," *New Blackfriars*, 99, no. 1080 (March 2018), 134.
9. Zahl, "Revisiting the 'Nature of Protestantism,'" 138. See also, Simeon Zahl, "Non-Competitive Agency and Luther's Experiential Argument Against Virtue," *Modern Theology*, 35, no. 2 (April 2019): 199-222.
10. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960), 3. 24. 4, 969. Henceforth cited as *Inst*. followed by book, chapter, section, and page number.
11. *Inst*. 3. 24. 5, 970.
12. Cf. *Inst*. 3. 24. 6-7, 971-4.
13. *Inst*. 3. 21. 1, 922.
14. *Inst*. 3. 14. 9, 975-6.
15. Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 94. Cf. 96: "the moral and devotional power in the doctrine of election was mighty."
16. Simeon Zahl, "On the Affective Salience of Doctrines," *Modern Theology* 31, no. 3 (July 2015), 432.
17. Cf. Richard A. Muller, "Arminius and the Reformed Tradition," *The Westminster Theological Journal*, 70, no. 1 (Spring 2008), 31: "the basic doctrinal position advanced both in the Confession and in the synods was anti-synergistic, namely, monergistic."
18. Quoted in W. Robert Godfrey, "Popular and Catholic: The *Modus Docendi* of the Canons of Dort" in *Revisiting the Synod of Dort* (1618-1619), eds. Aza Goudriaan and F.A. van Lieburg (Boston: Brill, 2011), 243-4.
19. Godfrey, "Popular and Catholic," 244.
20. For some helpful historical background on the Synod of Dort, see Lee Gatiss, "The Synod of Dort and Definite Atonement," in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, eds. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 143-47.
21. Article citations are taken from https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/canons-dort. I have not provided footnotes for each citation, since they are mostly in-text citations, referring to particular articles. For reference and further details on the Canons of Dort, see this CRCNA website.
22. Edwin H. Palmer comments that this answer from the Synod speaks to the finality of God's word over human authority and reason on this question. Edwin H. Palmer, "The Significance of the Canons for Pastoral Work," in *Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in Commemoration of the Great Synod of Dort*, 1618-1619, ed. Peter Y. De Jong (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Fellowship, Inc), 147.
23. Peter G. Feenstra, *Unspeakable Comfort: A Commentary on the Canons of Dort* (Winnipeg: Premier Publishing, 1997), 47.
24. See Erik A. De Boer, "'O, Ye Women, Think of Thy Innocent Children, When They Die Young!' The Canons of Dort (First Head, Article Seventeen)

Between Polemic and Pastoral Theology" in *Revisiting the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619),* eds. Aza Goudriaan and F.A. van Lieburg (Boston: Brill, 2011), 261-90.

25. Here, as Palmer notes, the Synod may be pointing to the importance of experiential knowledge of this comfort: "But when a person knows experientially the power of God's redemptive grace, then there is little that is more rewarding than to contemplate the unsearchable riches of his grace." Palmer, "The Significance of the Canons for Pastoral Work," 149.

26. Godfrey concludes, "The final form of the Canons of Dort presents a pastorally sensitive theology in terms that are popular and Catholic…. In doing so, the Synod followed the path of Martin Luther and John Calvin who had labored to reform the church by the Word of God by writing and preaching in a way that spoke to the people. While dialectic had triumphed in the schools, the Synod spoke the rhetorical language of the Reformers to the church. The *modus docendi* of the Synod of Dort continued the work of the Reformation." Godfrey, "Popular and Catholic," 260. Cornelius Van Til makes a similar point when he writes of the Synod, "It was the principle of the Reformation—the principle of Christ alone, Scripture alone, and faith alone—that the Reformed Churches were seeking to work out in its full implications." Cornelius Van Til, "The Significance of Dort for Today" in *Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in Commemoration of the Great Synod of Dort, 1618-1619*, ed. Peter Y. De Jong (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Fellowship, Inc), 186-187.

27. Cornelis P. Venema, *But for the Grace of God: An Exposition of the Canons of Dort* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Fellowship Inc.), 108. Steven B. Cowan equally refutes misconceptions of Calvinist predeterminism when he writes, "So, if properly understood, Calvinism in no way diminishes man's ability to make a free choice nor his moral responsibility." Steven B. Cowan, "Common Misconceptions of Evangelicals Regarding Calvinism," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Studies*, 33, no. 2 (June 1990), 194. Palmer rightly points out that the doctrine of unconditional election along with irresistible grace can help provide comfort even for pastors when people refuse to believe. Palmer states, "Then he [the pastor] realizes more than ever—something he tended to forget before—that God must first of all touch him… . God's election and the irresistible grace bring hope as the minister deals with the 'hopeless' cases." Palmer, "The Significance of the Canons for Pastoral Work," 139.

28. Venema, *But for the Grace of God*, 120.

29. Venema, *But for the Grace of God*, 118.

30. Benoit Denizet-Lewis, "Why Are More American Teenagers Than Ever Suffering From Severe Anxiety?" in *The New York Times Magazine* (Oct. 11, 2017).

31. Jean M. Tenge, "Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?" *The Atlantic*, September 2017.

32. See P. Jesse Rine and David S. Guthrie, "Steering the Ship through Uncertain Waters: Empirical Analysis and the Future of Evangelical Higher Education" in *Christian Higher Education*, 15, no. 1-2 (1 January 2016), 4-23; Terry Nguyen, "To Stay Competitive, Small Christian Colleges Emphasize Specific Niches" in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Feb. 5, 2019); Joseph Clair proposes an Augustinian response to the crisis in higher education in *Reading Augustine: On Education, Formation, Citizenship, and the Lost Purpose of Learning* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017). The financial pressures and strains affect not just Christian institutions but all types of small private liberal arts colleges around the country. See Alia Wong, "The Surreal End of an American College," *The Atlantic*, June 18, 2019.

33. Michael D. Hammond, "Christian Higher Education in the United States: The Crisis of Evangelical Identity" in *Christian Higher Education* 18, no. 1-2 (1 January 2019), 3-15.

34. David S. Drockery, "Toward a Future for Christian Higher Education: Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future," 15, no. 1-2, 115-119.

35. James K. A. Smith "The Future is Catholic: The Next Scandal for the Evangelical Mind," in *The State of the Evangelical Mind: Reflection on the Past, Prospects for the Future*, eds. Todd C. Ream et al (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic), 155.

36. Smith, "The Future is Catholic," 156. He states this otherwise on 158: "If I am suggesting that the future of the evangelical mind is Catholic, that is only because I believe the future of the evangelical mind has to be Protestant."